2017

19 August 2017, Saturday

This is a Lasius niger queen I captured during the 2017 mating flights. I placed her in a test tube on 8 Jul 17, 6 weeks ago. She laid eggs within a few days, which are developing nicely. I have fed her, which I don't normally do during this phase, hence her swollen abdomen, which you can see in the video on my YouTube channel.

1 September 2017, Friday

The queen now has a few small cocoons present, and I expect them to eclose (hatch) within the next 7-14 days. Once that happens I will keep an eye on their growth and move them to a normal ant farm in due course. The queen is looking healthy and she should raise a successful colony. I've been feeding her ant jelly once a week, so she and her larvae have had an advantage over her wild sisters. I wonder how many more of her winged sisters form her parent nest have gone on to successfully create a new colony.

4 September 2017, Monday

On Saturday, I just happened to glance at the test tube housing this new queen, and thought I saw some movement behind her. On further investigation I was excited to see that her first worker has emerged. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZ9441HYz6c

1 December 2017, Friday

My ants are currently hibernating. Therefore, no updates to this journal will be made until the awake in the Spring.

2018

My ants have woken up from their winter hibernation, or rather their 'semi-hibernation'. They didn't fully hibernate but rather they drastically reduced their activities, often staying within the nest and not feeding. The queen stopped laying eggs, and any present brood (larvae only) went into a stasis in which their development was 'frozen' or put on hold. This is normal behaviour.

Due to this semi-hibernation I stopped updated this journal, otherwise all you would have read, constantly, would be, not much activity today.

However, now that they are resuming their activities I am resume my activity on these journals.

15 March, Thursday

I say that this colony hibernated, but to be honest, out of all my colonies this one hibernated the less. Whereas all the other colonies are situated in my Ant Room, which, by design, has no heating other than natural sunlight heat. This colony remined on a shelf in my bedroom

within their test tube. This test tube is dirty and so I have attached a clean test tube to it, with a cotton wool water wick. She has not moved into it but seems to prefer to remain in the dirty tube. Her tube is, and always has been, exposed to ambient light. I covered up the new tube, hoping the darkness might encourage her to move into it. But has she? Nope!

The queen laid no more eggs but she, and her two workers remained active. I continued to feed them during this period. However, it seems now that both workers have died, leaving the queen on her own. From previous experience, once a new queen loses her first few workers, without any other replacing them, she rarely survives herself. It will be interesting to see what happens to this colony.

13 April 2018, Friday

Still only one worker with the queen, and some larvae, which I hope will soon commence their development, if they haven't already. The queen looks healthy enough. I just wish there was more progress to report. Still, let's keep our hopes up for this colony.

12 May 2018, Saturday

Things are looking up in this little colony. There are 4 cocoons now present in amongst the brood. Within a few weeks the lone worker should have some sisters.

Again, this worker and her queen remain in the dirty test tube but do have full access to the clean tube. I placed some protein jelly and a dead fly in the clean tube the other day, and the lone worker was vary

excited. It was soon after this that the cocoons appeared. Feeding the ants using this two-tube method is vary easy now, though it will become a lot more difficult as more ants are born.

Once the cocoons have hatched I will look at moving this colony into a proper set up. Might have to order another set up though.

3 June 2018, Sunday

A second worker was produced within the past few weeks, but she, or her older sister, was found dead at the far end of the test tube. Disappointing indeed. However, when I investigated the tube today I saw that three more workers had emerged form their cocoons. That's a colony size of 4 workers and 1 queen now, with a nice sized batch of larvae and cocoons waiting to eclose.

2 July 2018, Monday

After one year of slow activity in this colony there has been a sudden increase in population. Up until now the queen had not produced more than 2 workers at any one time. However, over the past 2 weeks there have been 15 workers born into the colony, and as many larvae and cocoons still present. Things are looking up for this colony now.

16 July 2018, Monday

This colony now has about 20 adult ants in it, along with a small number of brood and, of course, the queen. I have now moved these

ants into a bigger set up, though the nesting area still comprises of their test tube. What I have simply done is placed the now open test tube into a foraging tank in which is a thin layer of white calcium sand on the floor of the tank. They are investigating the sudden increase in their roaming area as I type this.

Thank you for reading my journal. If you have any questions you can email me on myrm@antnest.co.uk

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